THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY) : In addition to the locations pending from previous marketing plans, 927 retail outlet dealerships have been included in the Marketing Plan 1996—98 for different parts of the country. Commissioning of the dealerships depends on various factors such as locations advertised, interviews held by the Dealer Selection Boards, candidates appearing for interview for each location, issue of LOIs to the candidates obtaining of land and mandatory clearances, etc. by the dealers select.

**Deep Sea Oil Exploration in Gulf of Kutch by ONGC**

3017. SHRI ANANTRAY DEVSHANKER DAVE : Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned, "Rs. 300 crores ONGC plan for deep-sea oil exploration in Gulf of Kutch" published in the Hindustan Times dated 23rd March, 2000;

(b) the details of drilling depths, risk involved, ultradeep venture;

(c) the number of blocks offered to foreign private companies for oil exploration in 1991;

(d) the number of contracts signed and wells drilled out of the above blocks; and

(e) the reasons as to why the other blocks remained unattended and no action was taken since a decade has passed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd. (ONGC) has applied for one Petroleum Exploration Licence (PEL) in deep water areas of Kutch. The study of the data indicates that many prospects are present in the water depth range between 1500 to 2000 (plus) metres. The drilling depth depends upon the location of the sites for drilling over the identified prospects.

Oil exploration is a risk filled venture. Drilling in deep water requires deep water rigs and other technologies. keeping the opporunities and the challenges in view, ONGC plans to acquire both 2D and 3D seismic data, the

evaluation of which would decide prospects for taking up exploratory drilling including selection of drilling site. ONGC has a deep water rig capable of drilling in water depths of upto 900 metre.

(c) and (d) Seventy two blocks were offered to private (Foreign and Indian) companies for oil exploration in 1991. Contracts were signed for five blocks, of which four blocks have/had participating interest by foreign companies. Five wells were drilling in three signed blocks.

(e) The offer of blocks for exploration and exploitation is a continuous process. Since 1991 after the IVth round was announced, four more exploration rounds, one joint venture exploration round and one round under New Exploration Licensing Policy have been announced in which many of the blocks offered under IVth round in 1991 have been re-offered along with new blocks.

**Mobilisation of Funds by GAIL**

3018. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH : Will the MINISTER of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Gas Authority of India Ltd. (GAIL) is planning to mobilise upto Rs. 300 crores from the domestic market during the current year to fund its various projects;

(b) to what extent will GAIL be able to mobilise such resources;

(c) whether GAIL has any proposal to raise in any State-wise manner for projects specific to a given State;

(d) whether GAIL made any attempt to raisefunds funds in Andhra Pradesh for specific LPG projects in Andhra Pradesh; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. GAIL is planning to mobilise approximately Rs. 300 crore under debt instruments during 2000-01 depending on availability of internal resources and market conditions, for utilisation on specific projects.

(c) and (d) No, Sir.

(e) Does not arise.